



Memorandum

To: All Priests and Pastoral Facilitators

From: Reverend Christopher House, Chancellor

Date: March 21, 2016

Re: Mass Intentions

Following a discussion between Bishop Paprocki and the deans of the diocese, this memo is being sent out to reiterate the universal norms found in the *Code of Canon Law*, Book IV, Title III, *The Most Holy Eucharist*, Chapter III, *Offerings Given at the Celebration of Mass*.

“In accord with the approved usage of the Church, it is lawful for any priest who celebrates or concelebrates Mass to receive an offering to apply the Mass according to a definite intention (c. 945, §1).”

“Separate Masses are to be applied for intentions for which an individual offering, even if small, has been made and accepted (c. 948).” Accordingly, a priest accepts one stipend for one definite intention for one Mass. The content of this definite intention may be stipulated for one person, multiple persons and/or include multiple prayer requests. The priest celebrant or concelebrant, acting in the person of Christ the Priest, brings the intentions of Christ himself for the whole Church to the celebration of every Mass. While it is commendable for the priest to remember various intentions, these cannot be considered part of the stipended definite intention of the Mass and always remain separate and distinct.

“A priest who celebrates Mass more than once on the same day may apply the individual Mass for the intention for which the offering is made, but with the law that, except on Christmas, he may retain the offering for only one Mass, giving the other offerings to purposes prescribed by the ordinary, except for some recompense by reason of an extreme title. A priest who concelebrates a second Mass on the same day may not take an offering for it under any title. (c. 951, §1 and §2).”

Accordingly, a priest who on the same day celebrates an additional stipended Mass for a definite intention must submit the additional offerings to charity. For several years now, priests in this diocese have been asked to consider giving these excess stipends to the Commission for the Care of Infirm and Retired Priests (CCIRP).

It is unlawful for a priest to accept multiple stipends for multiple definite intentions for one Mass. Some parishes have adopted the practice of “collective intentions” whereby individual intentions from various individuals are offered together in one Mass. The Congregation for the Clergy has strongly cautioned against this practice. It issued special norms in 1991 for this practice should it be used, namely that this may not be done more than twice per week in any parish and that all parties involved must be informed that their intention(s) is/are being offered collectively with other intentions. Also, any amount above the ordinary amount received for a Mass stipend (\$10) is to be sent to the local Ordinary (here the diocesan bishop) for application to some purpose that he has determined such as CCIRP as previously mentioned. When collective intentions are offered at a Mass, the celebrant may only keep one of the offerings.

The *Code of Canon Law* is clear in that “any appearance of trafficking or trading is to be excluded entirely from the offering for Masses (c. 947).” In accepting Mass intentions it must be remembered that “no one is permitted to accept more offerings for Masses to be applied by himself than he can satisfy within a year (c. 953).” This applies not just to a priest but also to a parish. If a parish finds itself with more intentions than it is able to satisfy in one year, it should send out excess intentions so that they may be offered in a timely manner. Excess Mass intentions are always gratefully accepted by the Office for the Missions which distributes them to retired priests of our diocese and to priests in mission territories.

Regarding the accounting of intentions received, “the pastor and the rector of a church or other pious place which regularly receives offerings for Masses are to have a special book in which they note accurately the number of Masses to be celebrated, the intention, the offering given, and their celebration (c. 958, §1).” This is a reminder as the record of Mass intentions should already be regularly reviewed by the local dean. Concerning the bank account where offerings for Mass intentions are deposited, absolutely no other transactions should occur concerning this account other than the deposit of offerings for Mass intentions and the proper disbursement of those offerings for Masses offered.

Concerning the *Missa pro populo* (Mass for the People), c. 534¹ explains the law concerning this obligation for pastors. Collective Mass intentions may not be offered at the same Mass that is offered for the people.

The laws concerning Mass offerings can be found in cc. 945-958 in the *Code of Canon Law*. If you have any questions regarding Mass intentions and offerings please contact the Office of the Chancellor.

¹ C. 534 §1. After a pastor has taken possession of his parish, he is obliged to apply a Mass for the people entrusted to him on each Sunday and holy day of obligation in his diocese. If he is legitimately impeded from this celebration, however, he is to apply it on the same days through another or on other days himself.

§2. A pastor who has the care of several parishes is bound to apply only one Mass for the entire people entrusted to him on the days mentioned in §1.

§3. A pastor who has not satisfied the obligation mentioned in §§1 and 2 is to apply as soon as possible as many Masses for the people as he has omitted.